

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE
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AMEMBASSY BERLIN
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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 USBERLIN 1909

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, BWG, WB, GE
SUBJECT: WEST BERLIN REACTION TO POSSIBLE RESTRICTIVE MEASURES
AGAINST NON-ALLIED ACCESS TO EAST BERLIN

REF: (A) BONN 14604; (B) BERLIN 5203

SUMMARY: BERLIN SENAT PRESS SPOKESMAN HAS CALLED ATTENTION
PUBLICLY TO THE WARNING QUALITY OF NEUES DEUTSCHLAND ARTICLE
ABOUT ALLEGED PROSTITUTION FOR HARD CURRENCY ON THE ALEX IN
EAST BERLIN. INTERNAL ESTIMATE OF SITUATION BY SENAT OFFICIALS
IS THAT ND ARTICLE IS INTENDED LESS TO BE A THREAT AGAINST
WESTERN VISITORS THAN IT IS TO BE A WARNING TO GDR CITIZENS
THAT MISUSE OF RECENTLY SANCTIONED TWO-CURRENCY SYSTEM IN
GDR MAY LEAD TO RENEWED RESTRICTIONS OR POSSIBLE PROHIBITION
AGAINST HOLDING OR USE OF D-MARKS IN EAST GERMANY. GENERALLY,
WEST BERLIN PRESS HAS EMPHASIZED POTENTIAL THREAT TO VISITOR
REGIME, BUT HAS ALSO INDICATED ND ARTICLE COULD REFLECT
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GROWING CONCERN IN GDR LEADERSHIP THAT DECISION TO PERMIT
EAST GERMANS TO HOLD D-MARKS AND BUY IN INTERSHOPS MAY
HAVE BEEN A MISTAKE. MISSION TENDS TO SHARE
SENAT INTERPRETATION THAT WARNING IN ND ARTICLE DIRECTED
MORE AGAINST MISUSE OF D-MARK PRIVILEGES BY GDR RESI-
DENTS THAN IT IS AGAINST VISITORS FROM WEST. END
SUMMARY

1. REPORT IN WEST BERLIN TABLOID BILD THAT PROSTITUTION FOR WEST MARKS IS A THRIVING BUSINESS ON EAST BERLIN'S ALEXANDERPLATZ, AND THE UNUSUALLY QUICK RESPONSE IN NEUES DEUTSCHLAND (REFTELS) HAS PROMPTED WIDE PRESS REPORTING AND BRIEF SENAT COMMENT. IN GENERAL, THE PRESS HAS TAKEN DELIGHT IN PLAYING UP THE REPUTED FACTS TO POKE HOLES IN THE GDR'S CHARACTERISTIC SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS. MOST PRESS ARTICLES ALSO FOCUS ATTENTION ON THE THREAT THAT IT MIGHT BE NECESSARY TO RESTRICT VISITORS COMING TO EAST BERLIN UNLESS THEY HAVE "LEGITIMATE" MOTIVES, AS DEFINED BY THE GDR. PRESS ACCOUNTS ALSO SPECULATE THAT ND ARTICLE MAY BE PART OF A GDR BUILD-UP TO RESTRICT OR REMOVE D-MARK HOLDING PRIVILEGES FOR GDR CITIZENS. WHILE PRESS COVERAGE HAS BEEN HEAVY, MISSION WOULD NOT CHARACTERIZE IT AS BEING EXCESSIVE, GIVEN THE AMOUNT OF LOCAL INTEREST AND CONCERN OVER AN ISSUE AS IMPORTANT AS THE VISITS AGREEMENT, NOR HAS THERE BEEN UNDUE EDITORIAL REACTION.

2. SENAT SPOKESMAN SOETJE IN STATEMENT AUGUST 8 LIKEWISE EMPHASIZED THE DIRECT AND IMPLIED THREATS CONTAINED IN THE ND ARTICLE. SOETJE NOTED THAT THE WARNING AGAINST THE MISUSE OF D-MARKS IN EAST GERMANY WAS NOT ENTIRELY NEW, BUT ALREADY HAD BEEN HINTED AT BY HONECKER IN HIS RECENT INTERVIEW WITH THE SAARBRUECKER ZEITUNG.
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SOETJE OBSERVED THAT THE POSSIBLE RESTRICTIONS OF VISITOR TRAFFIC TO EAST BERLIN WAS OF COURSE THE IMPORTANT POINT AS FAR AS WEST BERLIN WAS CONCERNED. SOETJE OBSERVED, HOWEVER, THAT THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF WESTERN VISITORS CONDUCT THEMSELVES IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE VISITS AGREEMENT AND OBEY EAST GERMAN LAWS AND CONSEQUENTLY WILL FIND NO REASON TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT INFRINGEMENT OF THEIR RIGHTS TO VISIT THE EAST.

3. IN DISCUSSION WITH MISSION OFFICER AUGUST 11, ACTING HEAD OF THE POLITICAL SECTION, SOEDER SAID THAT CONSENSUS IN SENAT WAS THAT REACTION OF ND TO BILD ARTICLE CAME SO QUICKLY THAT THE SUBSTANCE MUST HAVE BEEN PREPARED WILL IN ADVANCE. FURTHER, SOEDER SAID, THE NATURE OF THE THREATS SUGGESTED THAT THE CONTENTS OF ARTICLE HAD BEEN CLEARED AT HIGH LEVELS OF GDR PARTY AND STATE MACHINERY. SENAT OFFICIALS TEND TO BELIEVE THAT THE GDR WAS PROBABLY LOOKING FOR AN OCCASION TO DELIVER A WARNING TO ITS OWN CITIZENS THAT THE PRIVILEGE OF HOLDING AND SPENDING WEST MARKS WAS BEING ABUSED,

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 USBERLIN 1909

AND UNLESS MATTERS IMPROVED CORRECTIVE MEASURES WOULD
BE CALLED FOR.

4. COMMENT: MISSION TENDS TO AGREE WITH SENAT OFFI-
CIALS' INTERPRETATION OF ND ARTICLE. WE HAVE SEEN NO
OTHER INDICATIONS THAT GDR INTENDS TO ATTEMPT TO RESTRICT
VISITOR TRAVEL TO AND THROUGH THE GDR, BUT WE HAVE
HEARD AND READ REPEATEDLY THAT MANY OFFICIALS IN THE
EAST WOULD LIKE TO HAVE THE CURRENCY SITUATION TIGHTENED
UP. WE CONCLUDE THAT THE ND ARTICLE
IS AIMED MORE AT GDR RESIDENTS THAN AS A WARNING TO THE
WEST. IT ALSO OCCURS TO US THAT MORE CONSERVATIVE SED
LEADERS ANXIOUS TO SEE WIDESPREAD USE OF DM WEST IN
GDR CURTAILED MIGHT HAVE FOUND THE PUBLICATION IN
NEUES DEUTSCHLAND OF THE FACTS OF THE BILD STORY A GOOD
DEVICE WITH WHICH TO STIR UP DEBATE ON THIS ISSUE WITHIN
THE PARTY. NELSON

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